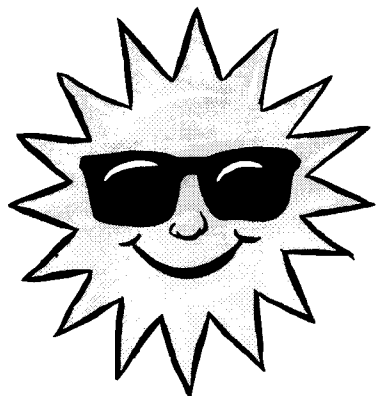


# Department of Human Services

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## Articles in Today's Clips

### Friday, July 7, 2006

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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# **Families may wait longer for child support**

## **Kids will suffer most from budget cuts, some say**

*July 7, 2006*

BY JACK KRESNAK  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Michigan's already overburdened child support system -- faced with losing close to one-quarter of its budget next year -- could be headed for a wide-ranging overhaul that could further weaken the state's largest program to prevent childhood poverty.

Some hail the prospect of change as long overdue for a system that pays out \$1.4 billion annually and touches one in seven Michigan families, including 584,000 children. Others worry that what emerges will bring more turmoil for children already suffering from custody disputes between parents.

The cuts, projected at \$58 million from a Friend of the Court system budget of \$252 million, could mean fewer workers to track down deadbeat parents, delays in processing child support payments and fewer workers to resolve disputes over support amounts, visitation or custody.

Needed upgrades to the state's computer system that tracks payments and generates checks to custodial parents also may be delayed, further reducing the efficiency of Friend of the Court operations.

"Ultimately, the children will suffer in this," Washtenaw County Prosecutor Brian Mackie said two weeks ago. "The likelihood of \$58 million being found at the 11th hour is very, very slim."

Mackie is coauthor of a recent report about the impending cuts prepared by the Child Support Leadership Council, an advisory group to the governor and the Michigan Supreme Court. The cuts, triggered by Congress' efforts to reduce the federal deficit and the state's ongoing budget problems, are scheduled to begin in the fall of 2007.

The leadership council's report calls the impending cuts "devastating" and warns: "It is not an exaggeration to say that county child support programs are about to be placed on life support."

A task force of county prosecutors, Friend of the Court staff and Department of Human Services officials is considering ways to restructure the system that some say could mean a drastic change in how county Friend of the Court offices function.

"It's all up in the air," Mackie said. "Maybe we'll do away with the Friend of the Court system. With such a huge, huge shortfall of money, there could be very radical changes." Susan Thorman, president of the Michigan Friend of the Court Association and the Friend of the Court in Shiawassee County, said the task force is taking a "no-holds-barred look at the program" and that recommendations would be coming before the end of summer.

"We would hope that the Legislature and the governor will see the value of this program," Thorman said late last month. "Families in Michigan are going to be affected. I don't see how they can't be. I don't know how I can offer services at a level that meets families in crisis with less dollars."

Between 1970 and 2000, Michigan's population increased by 12%, but divorces rose 30% and births to unmarried people jumped 146%, Mackie said. The numbers have put a strain on Friend of the Court offices and family courts. Nearly 70% of all new state court cases are filed in the family court division, Mackie said.

Many family cases involve protracted legal proceedings because parents can't agree on basic things such as visitation. Mackie said a rough estimate is that 20% of the cases consume 80% of the family courts' time and an expanded mediation system to resolve conflicts could be part of the solution.

Marilyn Grable, the single mother of an 11-year-old daughter, has had little luck negotiating with Michigan's child support collection system. She said she has never received a dime from her ex-boyfriend, the girl's father, who now lives in Tennessee. But, as ineffective as the Friend of the Court has been for her, Grable of Detroit is aghast that budget cuts soon could reduce funding of Michigan's system by nearly a fourth.

"I have an issue with whoever 'they' is who are doing the cutting," Grable, 31, said last week. "These people who are making these decisions have money. They're fine. They're well off. Everybody else who is being affected by it have no options. None at all."

Nearly two-thirds of Michigan's child support cases have arrearages that total \$9 billion, although some question the significance of the amount, saying it reflects unrealistically high amounts set for some parents, including those in prison and those unable to pay anything. An estimated two-thirds of the arrearage is seen as uncollectible, Mackie said.

Even so, if many of the 2,580 people working in Michigan's child support enforcement system -- including employees of 83 Friend of the Court offices, the state Department of Human Services and county prosecutor's offices -- are cut, officials predict that more children will fall into poverty and many of them will end up on state welfare rolls.

Suzanne Hollyer, whose Oakland County Friend of the Court office has 150 employees handling 58,000 cases, said. "We know when we can put more bodies on active enforcement that we can do better."

Currently, the federal government pays about two-thirds of the salaries and costs to run Michigan's child support system. The rest of the money comes from the state and counties, including some federal money paid as a reward for reaching certain goals.

However, the Deficit Reduction Act passed by Congress on Feb. 1 with the support of all of Michigan's Republican delegation and none of the Democrats, bars states from using the reward money to gain access to even more federal money. A Democrat-sponsored House bill that would rescind the child support cuts remains in committee.

"I don't care what party you're from, what could be more important than giving money to children?" said Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox, a Republican who has made child support collection a hallmark of his office.

Cox said Congress made a mistake.

"It's easy to overlook this because it just seems like it's a local concern," Cox said last week. "Unfortunately, most of these kids and their custodial parents are sort of clinically on the margins. They're not economically influential and by that I mean politically influential."

Marilyn Stephen, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services' Office of Child Support, said many of the anticipated cuts could be prevented if the state and counties find enough new money to match more federal funds.

"If we are able to make up \$20 million in new dollars to Michigan, we can draw a federal match that would put us at the funding level we're at today," she said, adding that it is too early to predict whether that could happen.

Contact JACK KRESNAK at 313-223-4544 or [jkresnak@freepress.com](mailto:jkresnak@freepress.com).

#### RELATED ARTICLES:

- [Moms, dads suffer from strained system](#)

#### MICHIGAN CHILD SUPPORT BY THE NUMBERS

- *1,043,263*

Total number of open cases in Michigan's Child Support Enforcement System

*584,271*

Children owed money through the child support system in fiscal year 2005

*434,967*

Children who received child support that year

*\$1.4 billion*

Amount of child support money collected and disbursed by Michigan last year

*\$9 billion*

Amount of past-due child support owed to custodial parents

*\$380 million*

Amount of past-due child support collected last year

*\$6 billion*

Amount of the arrearage deemed uncollectible

**Sources: Data from fiscal year 2005, Michigan Department of Human Services and the Child Support Leadership Council**

#### HOW TO BE HEARD

- House Bill 4794 was introduced in February by Rep. Jim McDermott, D-Wash. It would repeal the section of the federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 that ends federal matching of state spending of child support enforcement incentive grants. The bill has 23 cosponsors, including Reps. John Conyers and Sander Levin of Michigan. The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

Those who feel strongly on the issue should call or write to their representative in Congress. Find out who your representative is. The site allows you to e-mail your representative by clicking on their name.

You can also check the federal Web site and scroll down to the Michigan section.

### **WHAT IS A FRIEND OF THE COURT OFFICE?**

- Michigan's 83 county Friend of the Court offices assist family court judges in deciding issues of support, custody and visitation for hundreds of thousands of Michigan children.

The Friend of the Court employs referees to make recommendations to judges, staff attorneys to research legal issues and present them to the court, caseworkers to investigate finances and family backgrounds, mediators to help settle disputes and counselors to help kids and families deal with emotional issues.

# Moms, dads suffer from strained system

*July 7, 2006*

BY JACK KRESNAK  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

There are thousands of tales in Michigan's Friend of the Court system. Here are two that show how troubled and tangled cases can become.

## **Single mother supports her son**

Patti McCurdy, 50, of Attica was living in a Southfield trailer park in 1989 when she divorced her husband, who was making more than \$500 a week at a construction company.

An Oakland County judge, acting on the recommendation of the county Friend of the Court, ordered her husband to pay \$70 a week to support their only child, a son, now 20. Since then, McCurdy said, her ex-husband has not earned a regular paycheck or paid her much of the money.

"I've seen less than \$1,000 from him," she said last week. Her ex, who could not be reached for comment, is listed as owing her more than \$93,000.

"The way I see it, they won't pursue him because I never got any sort of welfare or food stamps," said McCurdy. If custodial parents receive financial support from the state, those amounts are added to the child support the noncustodial parent must pay.

"I always worked menial jobs to make ends meet to support myself and my son,"

McCurdy said. "Since there's nothing in it for the state, they won't pursue it."

Oakland County Friend of the Court Suzanne Hollyer said she could not comment on individual cases.

McCurdy said anyone can pay something, even \$10 or \$20 a week, but true deadbeats are not likely to pay if the system doesn't force them. With possible budget cuts for the Friend of the Court system, McCurdy said, "It's going to continue to get worse.

"Less deadbeats will be picked up for nonpayment of support; fewer parents who are owed child support for these kids" will "get it. Specifically, kids will suffer."

## **Father says he owes no money**

Allan Hrabovszky, 61, of Grosse Pointe Park has a good relationship with his ex-wife, Shirley Cantley, who lives in Gladwin with her second husband, their three children and her 28-year-old daughter by Hrabovszky. Though Cantley said she never asked for any help from the Friend of the Court, Hrabovszky has had child support deducted from every paycheck he has earned over the past 25 years. He has been jailed for a weekend, had his driver's license suspended and had his income tax refund checks intercepted by the state, though he has documents showing that as of 2003 he has no past-due amounts on his Friend of the Court account that began in 1979.

"I'm trying to figure a way to cut this loose," Hrabovszky said recently.

He traces some of this to two county Friend of the Court offices -- Roscommon and Tuscola -- involved in his case. He said neither office takes responsibility for fixing errors.

Friend of the Court personnel in Tuscola County finally agreed in September 2003 that he owed no more money, according to Hrabovszky's documents. But when he lost his job, either Tuscola or Roscommon Friend of the Court took \$400 from two of his unemployment checks. He doesn't know which office took the money because he can't get an accounting.

When he asked Tuscola County to inform Roscommon County that he had no arrearage, he said the worker in Tuscola told him her office has nothing to do with Roscommon.

Tuscola County Friend of the Court Mary Lou Burns could not be reached.

Records in Roscommon County say Hrabovszky still owes \$16,000 and that a warrant issued for his arrest in November 2003 remains valid, Roscommon Friend of the Court Thomas Swanson said last week.

Swanson said the file indicates Hrabovszky asked for an audit in 2004, but "it doesn't look like it's been done." Any audit can take one of his six staffers "hours and hours and hours" to complete, he said.

Swanson said the key to Hrabovszky's case is whether his ex-wife says he still owes her money.

"He doesn't owe me a dime and I wish they'd let the guy alone," Cantley told the Free Press.

Told that budget cuts may cause some Friend of the Court personnel to lose their jobs, Hrabovszky said, "That sounds like good news."

Contact JACK KRESNAK at 313-223-4544 or [jkresnak@freepress.com](mailto:jkresnak@freepress.com).

#### **RELATED ARTICLES:**

- [Families may wait longer for child support](#)

Published July 7, 2006

## **Vacant beds endanger future of Angel House**

### **Emergency shelter can't afford to stay open**

By Jen Marckini  
Lansing State Journal

MASON - After barely opening its doors, the tricounty area's only emergency shelter for abused and neglected children might have to shut down.

Since opening in May, the nonprofit Angel House has averaged as few as two to four children each day. To break even, officials say, it needs to fill 12 of its 15 beds.

Cutting staff to save money isn't an option, said Jim Paparella, executive director of the Child and Family Services - Capital Area, the agency that runs the \$1.7 million facility.

"Either we operate at full capacity or not operate at all," Paparella said.

Children are referred by protective services workers and stay up to two weeks while Child and Family Services finds foster homes best for their needs.

The state's push to keep children in "family-like" environments is hurting emergency shelters statewide, said Elizabeth Carey, executive director of the nonprofit Michigan Federation for Children & Families.

The state's child welfare policies changed after the planning for Angel House, which started in 2000, was well underway.

Carey said the state avoids placing abused or neglected children in emergency shelters, such as Angel House.



"They're caught right now in a shift in philosophy in the state," Carey said.

She said the change already forced four emergency shelters in Wayne County to close last year.

The state's first preference is to place a child in a relative's home, said Susan Hull, director of Ingham County office of the Michigan Department of Human Services. The second choice is foster care; emergency shelters are the last resort.

It costs the state an average of \$14 per day to put a preteen child into foster care versus about \$170 per day in a shelter such as Angel House.

The state's philosophy is not about saving money, though, Hull said.

"Even though it is a lot less to put kids in foster homes, we're looking at the best possible placement for the child," Hull said.

Hull said she couldn't estimate just how much the state is saving by de-emphasizing shelter care.

If the situation doesn't improve, Angel House would consider changes such as not operating 24 hours a day or accepting children from other counties.

There are 19 full-time and part-time paid employees and 10 volunteers working at Angel House.

"We could not reduce staff," Paparella said. "To do so would compromise the safety of children."

Hospitals can't operate at half-capacity, he said, so why should shelters?

Carey said the value of emergency shelters like Angel House is that they allow for more time to decide where to place children.

Sending a child off to foster care or to another relative's home is a good option in some cases, she said.

But hasty decisions could endanger the child.

Another advantage of Angel House, Paparella said, is that it provides services that reduce trauma for children who have been through abuse or neglect.

Children can be interviewed just once by counselors or law enforcement officials, instead of having to go through that again and again.

"You get what you pay for," Paparella said.

"We're preparing (children) for the next best placement in the community."

Contact Jen Marckini at 267-1301 or [jmarckini@lsj.com](mailto:jmarckini@lsj.com).

Published July 7, 2006  
[ From the Lansing State Journal ]

## **Governor signs bills on meth production**

### **Procedures added for cleaning drug site contaminants**

Associated Press

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has signed legislation designed to deal with the aftermath of making and using methamphetamine.

The 12-bill package, signed last week and filed with the secretary of state Thursday, requires the state to develop new procedures for cleaning up makeshift sites contaminated by methamphetamine production.

It also prohibits people from using Web sites to give instructions to make the illegal drug, and adds meth exposure to the definition of **child abuse**.

"For the first time, we can now charge those who expose children to the dangers of methamphetamine production with **child abuse** - because that's what it is," Granholm said in a statement.

One bill requires the state Department of Community Health to post on its Web site the location of the meth labs.

Others let the state attorney general sue people who have Web sites that give instructions on how to make meth, and make it a felony to sell a product containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine via mail, phone or Internet.

Meth - a highly addictive drug - can be made with common household products, including cold medicine that has pseudoephedrine.

It's a growing problem in many parts of Michigan and in several other states.

The state already has a law that allows only consumers 18 and older to buy Sudafed, Claritin-D and other nonprescription products containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, the key ingredient used to produce methamphetamine.

Adult customers are limited to buying two packages or no more than 48 tablets per visit and must show photo ID to make the purchase.

# **GOV SIGNS METH PACKAGE**

MIRS, Thursday, June 6, 2006

Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** recently signed a package of bills designed to protect kids from exposure to methamphetamines.

"For the first time, we can now charge those who expose children to the dangers of methamphetamine production with child abuse - because that's what it is," Granholm said. "I'm proud to sign legislation that will help our law enforcement officers better protect children and give our communities additional tools to deal with the environmental damage caused by the production of this illegal drug."

The 12-bill package includes the following bills:

**SB 1112**, sponsored by Sen. Patty **BIRKHOLZ** (R-Saugatuck Twp.), requires local law enforcement to notify the Department of Community Health (DCH) rather than the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) when it finds illegal meth labs.

**SB1115**, sponsored by Sen. Tom **GEORGE** (R-Texas Twp.), requires the state police to tell the DCH where the meth labs are located.

**SB1116**, sponsored by Sen. Bill **HARDIMAN** (R-Kentwood), includes exposure to meth production in the definition of suspected child abuse that social workers must report and requires law agencies to promptly investigate.

**SB 1119**, sponsored by Sen. Gerald **VAN WOERKOM** (R-Norton Shores), allows the Attorney General to press charges against a person who posts how to make meth on a Web site.

**SB1282**, sponsored by Sen. Jud **GILBERT** (R-Algonac), provides sentencing guidelines for people who sell over the counter drugs that can be used in meth production through the mail or over the Internet.

**HB 5798**, sponsored by Rep. Tonya **SCHUITMAKER** (R-Lawton), establishes that the DEQ rather than the DCH is the state's environmental health agency and also requires the two departments to work together to create meth lab cleanup standards.

**HB 5841**, sponsored by Schuitmaker, requires the state police to create a database to track meth production and distribution.

**HB 5930**, sponsored by Schuitmaker, allows the health department to examine a child without the parent's consent if the kid has been exposed to meth.

**HB 5822**, sponsored by Rep. Rick **JONES** (R-Grand Ledge), bans the sale of products that contain ingredients used to produce meth over the Internet or through the mail.

**HB 5843**, sponsored by Rep. Tom **CASPERSON** (R-Escanaba), requires the county prosecuting attorney to review cases involving kids who were exposed to meth production.

HB 5844, sponsored by Rep. Rick **BAXTER** (R-Concord), includes exposure to meth production in the definition of suspected child abuse that the health department can investigate.

HB 5845, sponsored by Rep. Tim **MOORE** (R-Farwell), requires the DEQ to report on the contamination caused by the release of toxins associated with drug labs.

Published July 7, 2006

## **Assistant prosecutor may testify in rape, abuse trial**

By Lisa Roose-Church  
Special to the State Journal

A preliminary exam for a Tyrone Township man accused of raping and torturing his 12-year-old son is adjourned so a judge can take testimony related to the defense's request to disqualify the assistant prosecutor.

Judge Suzanne Geddis of the 53rd District Court said it appeared Assistant Prosecutor Dan Rose placed himself in the role of a police officer - thus making him a possible witness at trial - when he interviewed the boy about the alleged assaults.

The boy alleges that his 35-year-old father raped and tortured him. The State Journal is not naming the father to protect the identity of the boy.

The alleged incidents came to light in May after the boy, who previously lived in Las Vegas with his mother, and his father were having dinner at the home of a neighbor.

The boy passed a note to one of the neighbor's children saying he was being abused by his father. The child, in turn, gave the note to his parents, who then called 911.

Rose told Geddis there was no reason to call him as a witness because there were five witnesses - two police officers, two LACASA representatives and a **Department of Human Services'** representative - to the interview.

Defense attorney Mack Spickard, however, said Rose played an active role in investigating the boy's complaints against his father.

Geddis said she wanted an evidentiary hearing to determine what, if anything, the five witnesses will provide. The hearing is set for Wednesday.

In a related matter, Rose's request to close the courtroom during the boy's testimony at the preliminary exam was approved.

The boy is in the custody of the Livingston County **Department of Human Services**.



People's forum

BAY CITY TIMES

Friday, July 07, 2006

## **Donna Yost**

Voice: Jared Shouey, Williams Township

Now that the Donna Yost matter appears to have ended, and the poor woman sent to prison until she dies, I want to offer the following observations.

After watching the Yost trial on Court TV for three days, and reading the reporting by The Times daily, it was obvious that Judge Caprathe heavily favored the prosecution. In my opinion, Donna Yost did not receive a fair trial, and I bet she will be back someday for a new trial following her appeal, if she gets a good lawyer. Many people in this county feel the same way I do, that Donna Yost did not kill her daughter.

I also think our prosecutor, Joseph Sheeran, should take some lessons from Yost's lawyer, Ed Czuprynski, on matters of good taste, sportsmanship and professionalism. The commentators on Court TV spoke highly of Mr. Czuprynski's abilities and his passion for his client in trial.

I am glad that I watched the broadcast. The local press coverage, while good, could not cover the trial in such depth. Like Court TV, I also thought Mr. Czuprynski, who handled the case for free, gave it his all. And how did our prosecutor respond the day he won his case? By throwing mud at Czuprynski, wryly noting that Yost's only appealable issue is ineffective assistance of counsel.

A few days after the trial ended, I noticed Czuprynski issued a public apology to Joe Sheeran for saying in his closing argument that Mr. Sheeran's lack of response to the allegations of sex abuse against the little girl helped cause her death. Czuprynski said at the beginning of the trial that sometimes children die and no one is to blame. That's true. So Czuprynski apologized for saying Sheeran should be blamed for Monique's death.

Quite a contrast between the two lawyers, isn't there? Quite an injustice in the outcome, wasn't it?

# **Attorney faces sex charge**

Friday, July 07, 2006

By Steven Hepker  
shepker@citpat.com -- 768-4923

A Jackson bankruptcy attorney was charged Thursday with a sexual crime involving a girl.

James R. Knapp, of Concord Road in Jonesville, was arraigned on a charge of fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct with a 12-year-old girl.

Knapp turned himself in to the court with his attorney, Kenneth Hotchkiss, after considerable negotiations with prosecutors.

The alleged victim's family claimed Knapp raped the girl. The Jackson County sheriff's office investigated the complaint and filed a report with prosecutors.

Assistant Prosecutor Allison Bates and investigators declined to discuss details.

Knapp waived the reading of the complaint in a 1:30 p.m. arraignment.

District Judge Charles Falahee Jr. set a \$5,000 personal bond and scheduled a hearing for July 14 to gauge plea negotiations.

Knapp has until then to voluntarily be booked and fingerprinted at the jail, Falahee said.

# **Former cop faces criminal sexual conduct charge**

Friday, July 07, 2006

BAY CITY TIMES

A 38-year-old former Buena Vista Township police officer remains free pending a hearing in Bay County District Court on charges he had sexual relations with a 15-year-old Williams Township girl.

Ronell Weatherspoon of Saginaw was a township officer when he was alleged to have been involved with the girl in a Williams Township home where she was babysitting in April, according to court documents.

Weatherspoon was off duty when he met a woman in a Saginaw bar in March and knew where she lived in a Williams Township mobile home park, according to Bay County Sheriff John E. Miller. He also was aware that the woman had two teenage girls babysitting for her when she was not at home, Miller said.

Investigators said that Weatherspoon went to the home on April 7, when he knew the woman was not there, and brought alcohol for the girls. He is accused of having sex with one of them. The girl's father filed a complaint against Weatherspoon when he learned about the incident, Miller said.

Weatherspoon was charged with third-degree criminal sexual conduct in May and demanded a preliminary examination in Bay County District Court. A hearing involving attorneys in the case will be held Aug. 4 by District Judge Timothy Kelly.

Weatherspoon was released on \$50,000 bond pending further court action. If convicted, he faces a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison.

Investigators said it is believed Weatherspoon was dismissed from the Buena Vista police department, but officials of that agency would only say he is no longer a police officer with the department.

# **BV parents relieved band sex-case over**

Friday, July 07, 2006

DARRYL Q. TUCKER  
THE SAGINAW NEWS

Buena Vista parents are calculating their losses in the wake of a teacher's courtroom admission that she had sex with six students.

Lost opportunities. Lost band members. Lost innocence.

Former band instructor Laura L. Findlay faces at least seven years in prison, but the judge who sentences her could put her behind bars for life.

"I'm happy it's over," said the mother of one of the victims. "I just want it to be over."

Prosecutors were prepared to start picking jurors today for Findlay's trial, but she stood up in Saginaw County Circuit Court on Thursday and took the deal authorities were offering.

"I plead guilty," she said, to 22 counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct with a person younger than 16.

The charge involves penetration and is the most serious sexual offense.

Circuit Judge William A. Crane will sentence Findlay on Thursday, Aug. 17. Although prosecutors offered a minimum of seven years in prison, Crane may sentence Findlay to whatever maximum he wants.

Prosecutors say Findlay, 32, who is jailed on a \$500,000 cash or surety bond, had sex with male students from Ricker Middle School from November 2004 to March 2005. She taught at Ricker for seven years.

Assistant Prosecutor James T. Borchard said he discussed the plea agreement with the victims and their parents, and they agreed with it.

Borchard said he was prepared to go to trial. However, the victims won't have testify now.

"It's hard enough talking to prosecutors and reliving it all over again," he said.

Besides, there's no guarantee that a state Parole Board will release Findlay after she serves seven years, Borchard said.

There were warning signs from the start of Findlay's tenure with the district, especially involving her attire, said Sarah E. Jackson, 58, a former Buena Vista Board of Education member.

The band teacher favored short skirts, Jackson said.

"My concerns were that you have to watch your dresswear," Jackson said. "She should have looked like a teacher and dressed appropriately, because you are trying to teach children."

Jackson put several of her children through the Buena Vista district. She said administrators need to do a better job with background checks.

"We have to do more checking when we hire someone in the school system," Jackson said. "You almost have to go door-to-door (to check) when you are dealing with kids. We have had too many mistakes in Buena Vista."

"The situation is heartbreaking on both ends. To have a teacher and a pretty good group of kids, and that band was going places."

Jackson said parents have to get more involved with the district or else the atmosphere will not improve.

"The school district is what parents make it," she said. "We need to wake up."

### **No rolling the dice**

Defense attorney James F. Piazza said if Crane decides not to sentence Findlay to the minimum of seven years, she may withdraw her plea.

"She made her choice," he said. "If a jury found her guilty, she would be facing life. She decided not to roll the dice with the jury."

Six eighth-graders -- 13 and 14 -- testified during preliminary hearings that Findlay engaged in oral sex with them and gave them lap dances. At least two of them said they penetrated Findlay.

The teens, who were band members and basketball players, said the incidents occurred in the band room or in Findlay's sport utility vehicle behind Fort Saginaw Mall, at Holland and Outer Drive.

Board of Education members did not fire Findlay but laid her off as part of sweeping budget cuts.

Findlay still has seniority with the district even though she is laid off, said Superintendent Deborah T. Clarke.

"The board will not make any decisions (on Findlay) until after the sentencing," Clarke said.

Darryl Q. Tucker and Mike Rocha are staff writers for The Saginaw News. You may reach Tucker at 776-9686, Rocha at 776-9687.

# **Boys charged in car thefts**

## **Youths, ages 12 to 16, deny involvement in recent series of cases**

Friday, July 07, 2006

**BY AMALIE NASH**  
**News Staff Reporter**

Ann Arbor Police say three boys had just attempted to steal their fourth car of the night when officers caught up with them on the city's west side early Thursday.

The trio, ranging in age from 12 to 16, started off in the Ypsilanti area where they claim they stole a silver Jeep Liberty that had already been stolen by someone else and stashed, Ann Arbor Detective Brian Zasadny said.

From there, they drove to Stadium Place Apartments in Ann Arbor and stole a white Dodge Stratus, leaving the Liberty behind, Zasadny said. Then it was onto Pauline Boulevard, where they traded the Stratus for another Jeep Liberty, this time a maroon-colored one, Zasadny said.

The teens drove to the Pinelake Village Cooperative and attempted to steal another Dodge Stratus, but were scared away by the owner, and were soon stopped by police as they fled in the Jeep Liberty, Zasadny said.

"It was one busy night, and they're certainly suspects in multiple stolen cars in Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County and Ann Arbor," Detective Sgt. Jim Stephenson said.

Washtenaw County Sheriff's Cmdr. Dave Egeler said deputies are reviewing whether the boys could be involved in at least three similar car thefts on the west side of Ypsilanti Township since the beginning of May.

Stephenson said the teens arrested Thursday denied any involvement in a recent rash of car thefts, which have occurred on Turnberry Lane, Chelsea Circle, Partridge Path and surrounding neighborhoods on Ann Arbor's south side. There have been eight car thefts and 14 attempted car thefts in that part of the city over the last four weeks.

"Auto theft is down dramatically from last year, but the one thing we're seeing this year is a concentrated area," Deputy Chief Greg O'Dell said. "In the last month, they've been almost exclusively on the south side."

During the same one-month time frame last year, 15 car thefts and 35 car theft attempts occurred in Ann Arbor, O'Dell said.

In the thefts the boys are accused of committing, they punched the ignition in at least some of the vehicles to steal them, Zasadny said. Police said the 12-year-old was not a major participant and appeared to have simply gone along with his 14-year-old and 16-year-old companions for the ride Wednesday night.

"They were using these cars for transportation - simply to get around," Stephenson said.

Stephenson said police believe the youths also planned to trade the cars for drugs. He said the investigation is continuing into the potential involvement of others.

The youths were taken to the juvenile detention facility, and police are seeking auto theft charges against them.

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## Single Point Of Entry Premature?

MIRS, Thursday, July 6, 2006

The long-term health care industry says a bill that is supposed to make finding long-term health care easier could be premature and may result in increased Medicaid costs to the state.

In May, a House subcommittee passed HB 5389, sponsored by Rep. Rick **SHAFFER** (R-Three Rivers), which <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/mileg.asp?page=getObject&objName=2005-HB-5389> would create statewide single points of entry (SPEs). Shaffer said this would create a "one-stop shop" for those people who are trying to find long-term health care for loved ones.

The idea is that SPEs would let families get all of the information they need about Medicaid long-term care services by going through one agency or organization.

Earlier this year, a 21-person task force put together by the governor to come up with long-term health care solutions recommended SPE pilots. In June, Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** announced four awards worth \$34.83 million to start the SPE demonstration sites.

The demonstration sites are being run by the Department of Community Health (DCH) and all four projects are supposed to last 27 months. Those in support of the pilots want to see if they save the state money and reduce the number of people who end up in facilities that don't fit their needs.

The Health Care Association of Michigan (HCAM) and other nursing homes opposed to the legislation were part of the long-term health care task force and agreed to sign off on recommending the SPEs. However, the understanding was that the pilots would be an experiment of sorts and then, after the 27 months, all of the players would come back to the table and assess their effectiveness.

HCAM members of the task force supported this recommendation because they wanted to see what happened, not because they wanted an unsubstantiated mandate, said Kristen **PARKER**, HCAM director of communications.

HCAM wants to see if the pilots actually save the state money, like supporters claim they will. Apparently in some states like Colorado, similar programs have actually ended up costing the state more, Parker said.

In Colorado, similar pilot programs did not show a reduction in nursing home admissions but actually showed a tripling of people enrolled in community home based-waivers, which are funded through Medicaid by the state, Parker said.

If more people are getting put into state-funded programs or are being shifted to different services within the funding source, the state will not save money, Parker said.

*MIRS* asked if other states were experiencing problems similar to those in Colorado. Parker said she was only familiar with the Colorado example.

Shaffer said that 32 other states have some mandates in place though he couldn't say how strict the mandates are or if they were put into place after pilot programs.

"There is a national movement toward this sort of service," Shaffer said.

This, as well as getting informed access to families, is the reason the legislation has to move forward, Shaffer said. When the pilots are finished in two years, the DCH will report the pilot results to the Legislature and then the future of the program will be decided, Shaffer said.

Jon **REARDON**, with the Hoyt Nursing and Rehab Center, still can't understand why the Legislature doesn't just wait until it has concrete data supporting or denying the effectiveness of the SPEs.

"To expand the services the government must find funding," Reardon said. "Right now there's no sound science to support it (SPEs)."

Right now the legislation is sitting in the House. It unanimously passed out of committee and got to the House floor May 2, 2006, but hasn't moved since.

The Michigan Center for Aging Policy, which is in support of the bill, said the bill isn't moving because of the nursing home lobby. The agency recently sent this statement about the bill to its members in a newsletter:

*"The delay in scheduling a vote is troubling, since the bill has overwhelming support in the House. The influence of the powerful nursing home lobby is seen by many as the reason; nursing homes are opposing the bill because it will impact their financial bottom line."*

Shaffer said he hopes this isn't true.

"I hope this bill will be judged on its merit," he said. Shaffer said he believes the bill will be addressed once the budgets are passed.

Parker didn't deny that state money could be shifted away from nursing homes if the SPE program succeeds. When people are shifted to different Medicaid eligible programs, such as in-home care, and are pulled away from nursing homes, Medicaid money could be taken from nursing homes, Parker said.

However, last year, the state's nursing homes gave \$375 million in uncompensated care to Medicaid recipients, a number Parker used to support her claim that nursing homes aren't after the "bottom line."

"We understand what they're (Center for Aging Policy) saying, but we're in full support of informing the customers of their options whether they need a nursing home or not," Parker said. "The problem with the legislation is that they want to legislate something that hasn't been tested."

# **Husband Appears In Court Over Wife's Severed Arm**

## ***Man Held On Bond***

POSTED: 5:36 pm EDT July 6, 2006

A 39-year-old suburban Detroit man accused of severing his wife's arm appeared in court in Monroe Thursday.

Stephen Humphrey of Romulus is in the Monroe County Jail on a \$100,000 bond. A pretrial hearing is scheduled for July 17, with a preliminary examination expected the next day.

Meanwhile, Brenda Humphrey, 34, is recovering at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Washtenaw County.

She told sheriff's deputies she and her husband had been drinking late Saturday at a bar in Milan when they began to argue. She said she got out of their car and tried to reach in for a cellular phone and that her husband cut off her arm. The limb is still missing.

# **Program helps employ homeless veterans**

Friday, July 07, 2006

By Kathryn Prater  
The Grand Rapids Press

GRANDVILLE -- Navy veteran Jim Zukowski says he just needs help getting back on his feet.

It's what Goodwill Industries of Greater Grand Rapids will try to give him through a new, federally funded employment preparation program.

"All I really want is just to be a productive citizen, part of society," said Zukowski, a 47-year-old recovering alcoholic.

He has been unemployed since losing his job as a parking attendant in November and stays in an apartment provided by Health Care for Homeless Veterans in Grand Rapids.

Through the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program, announced Thursday by Goodwill, the Grandville-based agency will use \$250,000 from the Department of Labor to help 138 Kent County veterans get back into the work force during the next year, said Career Services Senior Manager G. Luke Carter, a Marine veteran.

Goodwill will help them find temporary or permanent housing, or refer them to local agencies that can help them with mental health issues, substance abuse rehabilitation and health care.

"In order for homeless veterans or citizens to engage in holding jobs down, they need to be stabilized," Carter said. "We want to provide the stability that is needed to make a change in their lives."

Once they are ready, veterans can enter Goodwill's vocational program, which involves honing interview techniques and social skills, as well as completing on-the-job training.

On any given night in Grand Rapids, about 340 veterans are homeless, said local Goodwill President and CEO Phil Weaver, an Army veteran.

"It's important to do something for these individuals who have given us their time and their life to protect us," Weaver said. "Now it's time for us to help them."

U.S. Rep. Vern Ehlers, R-Grand Rapids, lobbied for Goodwill to get the money.

"It's doing two good things at once: We're taking care of people who have served our country very well, and at the same time helping the homeless," he said.

Detroit Free Press Letters

Friday, July 7, 2006

## **Underfunded youth services**

Your proposal for a transitional campus, originally suggested by columnist Rochelle Riley, is one way to serve youths aging out of foster care ("Transition Solution," July 2). Another approach already exists. Lutheran Social Services of Michigan has several Youth Independent Living programs -- in Lansing, Jackson and Grand Rapids -- that help teens and young adults transition from foster care to independent living.

Thirty-one other foster care agencies have contracts to provide similar programs in locations throughout the state.

Although not campus-based, these programs also provide housing, job training and independent skills training in a very efficient and cost-effective way.

The programs are underfunded and cannot meet the demand for this service. We need to provide adequate funding to these community-based efforts that can reach youths throughout the state, so they can get the help they need without being forced to leave their communities for a transitional campus.

Mark Stutrud

*President*

*Lutheran Social Services of Michigan*

Detroit

# Created for Caring runs out of money, forced to close

Friday, July 07, 2006

By PATI LALONDE  
BAY CITY TIMES WRITER

Created for Caring, 400 N. Madison Ave., closed its doors on June 30, and it's unclear if the agency that provided help for those in need will ever reopen.

The nonprofit agency, which opened in 1983, had struggled in recent months with donations falling short of its cost to operate.

"We have been in the process of downswing for a long time," said Robert Dunn, a local attorney and president of Created for Caring's board of directors. "We have a buyer for the Goddeyne Building, which housed the resale shop. (The deal) is not yet closed. If we could sell the church building (on Madison Avenue), it would solve all of our financial problems and we could continue to operate."

Dunn said an organization expressed interest in the building, but no offer has been made.

In April, executive director Connie J. Pratt announced that unless \$20,000 in donations was raised, the agency would close. The money held out until last month.

Created for Caring, which serves around 7,500 clients a year, helps those who don't fit the criteria for aid from other agencies. The agency provides material assistance such as furniture, household items, personal-care products and clothing to those in need.

It also helps those who need temporary help with housing or utility bills.

Dunn said the agency now has little left in the checkbook to pay its own bills. Some of the bills will be paid when the sale of the Goddeyne Building closes, hopefully next week, he said.

"Things were tough for us and it's been more of the same," Dunn said. "The donations dried up. We're not getting the grants that we used to. Some of our income sources dried up."

One of those income sources was the YMCA of Bay County day care program, which rented space in the former church building. The day-care program will move out by August.

The Unity of Faith church group continues to rent space for services twice a week in the building, Dunn said.

Four of Created for Caring's eight staff members, including Pratt, are continuing to work on a volunteer basis, Dunn said.

"The staff is dedicated," Dunn said. "They may not be getting paychecks, but they are there...as long as they possibly can or until we can sell the Madison Avenue building, or some other miracle comes out of the sky."

George Heron, retiring executive director of the United Way, is trying to lend a hand. Created for Caring directors met with Heron on Thursday in hopes of working out a solution to help people who are affected by the agency's closing. Created for Caring does not receive United Way funding.

Heron said that help may come in joining Created for Caring with another organization or streamlining what Created for Caring does.

Heron said he is identifying what services the community would lose if Created for Caring doesn't reopen and what agencies can handle some of services Created for Caring provides.

"My hope is that we can find a niche for them in the community," Heron said.

Dunn said the most important program the agency handles is the material assistance program that offers temporary help.

"We're not done yet," he said. "We want to somehow pull this thing together and be there for the community."

Already, the people who need Created for Caring are noticing its absence.

"A lady came to the door yesterday," Dunn said. "We had to turn her away. I was upset all the way back to my office."

- Pati LaLonde is a features writer for The Times. She can be reached at 894-9666, or by e-mail at [plalonde@bc-times.com](mailto:plalonde@bc-times.com)

Lansing State Journal Letters

Friday, July 7, 2006

## **Reform welfare**

Reform of Michigan's welfare system is pending before our lawmakers. Voters need to send a clear message to Gov. Jennifer Granholm that we want reform on this system, which is now draining our tax dollars and creating an atmosphere of dependency in the state.

If she does not vote for reform this time around, it is time for voters to take action and vote for a change: Dick DeVos.

Chelsea Tirrell  
Charlotte



Friday, July 07, 2006

## **Prosecutor may thwart bid by Unger's mom to see kids**

### **She fears she won't get chance to ask court for visitation before son is sentenced, loses rights.**

Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

**HUNTINGTON WOODS** -- A convicted killer's mother wants the right to visit her grandchildren but faces opposition from not only their other grandparents but the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office.

Mark Unger, 45, is to be sentenced July 18 in Benzie County for the 2003 murder of his wife, Florence, 37, at a northern Michigan resort.

Unger's mother, Bette Rosenthal, of Islamorada, Fla., wants Oakland Family Court Judge Linda Hallmark to hear the grandparent visitation matter July 12. She's afraid that once Unger is sentenced to mandatory life in prison, he'll lose all parental rights and she, too, might lose any legal standing with the children, according to her attorney, Daniel R. Victor.

"These two boys have gone through so much already," Victor said. "Their mother is killed. The father taken from them. Now they could lose their grandmother too? How many family members do we have to rip away?"

Rosenthal "has no choice but to file" this, Victor said. "This is a legal requirement to assure she has no problems seeing them in the future."

The court filing noted Rosenthal makes frequent trips to Michigan to visit Max, who turns 13 on July 26, and Tyler, who will turn 10 on Tuesday. Both boys are in the temporary custody of Florence's parents, Harold and Clare Stern, in Huntington Woods, for 18 months. It is believed the Sterns will seek to adopt the boys after Unger's parental rights are ended.

Prosecutor David Gorcyca said his office will seek a neglect hearing and termination of Unger's parental rights. On Thursday, Keith J. Lermينياux, the county's deputy corporation counsel, asked for an adjournment until July 26.

Victor said he would agree to such a delay -- providing the prosecutor's office also puts a stay on the termination of Mark Unger's parental rights until a later date.

Rosenthal believes she has rights, too.

She notes how when Max was only 3 months old, the Ungers asked her to come to Michigan to baby-sit and care for him for a full week. At least twice a year, the boys visited her for at least a week in Florida. And she has attended school events and the boys' sports activities, cheering them from the sidelines, according to the complaint.

The lawsuit said Rosenthal had not missed a single birthday party until she was told she could not attend Tyler's 8th birthday. She has since been unable to play tic-tac-toe,

the Memory game, tennis or checkers with the boys -- all games she taught and played with them until she was denied visitation.

Victor said the boys have had no meaningful contact with Rosenthal for almost a year and before that, only supervised visits.

"The last time she saw Max was in May at his bar mitzvah and that was in temple," Victor said. "At one point, my client asked for visitation and was told (by the Sterns) 'only with a court order.'

"She was given no explanation and continues to be punished because of her son," Victor said. "She's heartbroken."

During the Unger trial, Clare Stern told a reporter they were acting on advice of the court.

Victor said he has been assured by the Unger family they will not seek custody of the boys.

"I think everyone agrees they have been through enough already," Victor said. "This is a time for the entire family to unite around them."

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